

103

Timothy KELLY 117049  
ASPC Tucson

## VETERAN ESSAY

On June 12<sup>th</sup> 1970, eleven days after my high school graduation I entered the United States Navy to begin eight years of service to my country.

Now in 1970 during the height of the Vietnam War it was not always the popular decision to serve in the Military. This was a time of change and protest. When young men my age looked more to fight in the streets of America than to travel halfway around the world to fight in an increasingly unpopular war. I volunteered to be stationed in Vietnam but was instead assigned to a Naval Communication Station in Morocco North Africa.

During my first four years in the Navy I spent nearly all of that time in Morocco. I discovered that other people lived very different lives from what I was used to at home. I traveled through Europe and spent much of my time learning about the cultures and peoples of the countries I visited. I always found that as long as I was respectful and showed a sincere wish to connect with people, then they welcomed and connected with me. I was and am proud to have

2 of 3

served my country. I only wish my country had been as proud of my service as I.

The first indication of this occurred in 1973. When a fellow sailor and friend of mine died in an accident in Morocco I was chosen to escort his remains back to his family in Colorado. I was advised by my superiors not to wear my Naval Uniform while traveling inside the United States.

Now during this time, uniform or not, I was easily recognizable as a member of the military simply by my haircut. During a flight transfer at JFK International Airport in New York, I was approached by a young woman, probably my own age, and accused of murder and worse. "How could I support baby killings and bombings?" she said, shouting at me. Since I truly did not understand what she was talking about, I simply walked away.

Over the next five years I enjoyed duty stations in San Diego, Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay and finally a year and a half aboard the U.S.S. Enterprise and a Western Pacific cruise. As time passed, once aga-

3 of 3

It became honorable to serve our country  
as a soldier or sailor or Marine or airman.  
I never understood that. I had always  
believed that my service was honorable  
but my country did not allow me to feel  
that honor. During all those years I've  
never forgotten that young woman or the  
things she said to me. What hurt more for  
me was not that young woman or the terrible  
things she said to me. What hurt most though  
and still to this day was that Pentagon  
Advisory not to wear my uniform inside  
the United States. I wore my uniform in  
Morocco, and Spain and Germany and I  
did so proudly, but, I could not come  
home in my uniform.

6

Timothy Kelley

Timothy Kelley 117044  
ASPC Tucson